State Responsibility Area Classification System







STATE OF CALIFORNIA
RESOURCES AGENCY
BOARD OF FORESTRY
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY
AND FIRE PROTECTION
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STATE RESPONSIBILITY AREA CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) conducted a statewide review and delineation of State Responsibility Area (SRA) in 1970. Although some subsequent revisions to that delineation have been approved by the Board of Forestry, the classification of SRA has not kept current with landuse changes. There is a need to review and update the delineation of SRA in a formal manner, statewide.

In its supplement to the 1980-81 FY budget, the Joint Legislative Budget committee directed that:

"The Board of Forestry shall conduct a comprehensive review of lands receiving direct protection from the department for the purpose of revising state responsibility boundaries to exclude areas which should be the responsibility of local government or federal agencies. As a Legislative Budget Committee by 11/1/80 on its criteria for determining whether lands currently classified as state responsibility conform to the provisions of Sections 4126-4128 of the Public Resources Code."

"The department shall report to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee by 12/1/80 on a schedule and plan for providing support to the Board of Forestry in conducting such a review."

PURPOSE

- 1. To provide a systematic and uniform process for identifying land-use changes which cause or may cause a change of the classification of SRA.
- 2. To review the existing classification of SRA to determine that all such lands are properly classified.

GOALS

- To provide a procedure which ensures statewide consistency in classifying SRA.
- 2. To provide an ongoing procedure that will enable the CDF to respond in timely manner to land-use changes.
- 3. To provide local government sufficient time to plan for changes in the classification of SR.
- 4. To involve the public in decisions about the classification of SRA.

OVERVIEW

This classification system has five levels. They are:

- 1. Field evaluation
- 2. Regional review
- 3. Statewide review
- 4. Director's approval
- 5. Board of Forestry approval.

The field evaluation is accomplished at the Ranger Unit or Contract County. This evaluation identifies lands that may warrant reclassification. Any area so identified is documented and forwarded for Regional review (second level).

The Regional review ensures that the system has been consistently applied at the Ranger Unit or Contract County level. After completing the review, the Region forwards the areas identified for possible reclassification to Sacramento.

The Statewide Review Team (third level) reviews the documentation. The Statewide Review Team also conducts on-site inspections as needed. The Statewide Team then forwards its recommendations to the Director (fourth level).

The Director reviews all proposed changes in classification. Those changes that the Director approves are sent to the Board of Forestry so that public hearings may be scheduled. At this time the Director notifies all affected local government agencies of the proposed changes and their potential impacts.

The Board of Forestry is fifth level. Under PRC Section 4125, the Board is the final authority for approving changes in classification of SRA.

LEGAL BASIS

This classification system, which defines land for which the state assumes primary financial responsibility for protecting natural resources from damages from fire, is based on existing law (PRC 4125-4128). It is important to understand that the system is not based on the ability to protect an area from fire, but rather on the vegetative cover and natural resource values enumerated in PRC 4126:

- a) Lands covered wholly or in part by forests or by trees producing or capable of producing forest products. Lands covered wholly or in part by timber, brush, undergrowth, or grass, whether of commercial value or not, which protect the soil from excessive erosion, retard runoff of water or accelerate water percolation, if such lands are sources of water which is available for irrigation or for domestic or industrial use.
- b) Lands in areas which are principally used or useful for range or forage purposes, which are contiguous to the lands described in subdivisions (a) and (b).

Lands which do not qualify as SRA are defined in PRC Section 4127: "The board shall not include within state responsibility areas any of the following lands:

- a) "Lands owned or controlled by the federal government or any agency of the federal government.
- b) "Lands within the exterior boundaries of any city.
- c) "Any other lands within the state which do not come within any of the classes which are described in Section 4126."

In addition, PRC, Section 4128, states that, "The board may, for purposes of administrative convenience, designate roads, pipelines, streams, or other recognizable landmarks as arbitrary boundaries."

These definitions provide the basis for the field evaluation of SRA.

REVIEW SCHEDULE

Statewide Review, normal 2000 and each five years thereafter.

Special Reviews – as needed.

FIELD EVALUTION

<u>STEP I – DEFINING EXISTING CLASSIFICATION STATUS</u>

- A. Print a 7 ½ minute guad map using the data found on the Fire Plan database.
 - 1. On that map use the following shapefiles, also found on the Fire Plan database;
 - a. SRA shape file for the area being evaluated
 - b. Current road layer
 - c. Current ISO city boundary layer
 - d. Any other layer you might need
 - 2. Shade all current (original) SRA polygons red
 - 3. Shade any area that is "Lands within the exterior boundaries of incorporated cities" (ISO layer) light yellow.
 - 4. "Lands owned or controlled by the federal government or any agency of the federal government' (include all federal lands regardless of existing fire protection responsibilities) – shade dark green.

NOTE: Incorporated cities and federally owned or controlled lands are automatic exclusions from SRA. Their boundaries must be kept current on the official SRA maps. The procedure for recording these changes is described in Appendix VIII.

<u>STEP II – IDENTIFYING AREAS FOR FIELD EVALUATION</u>

The working map prepared in Step I describes the current SRA classification. Two basic questions remain to be answered.

- 1. Are there any lands currently not classified SRA on either side of the SRA/LRA (Local Responsibility Area) boundary line which meet the criteria for SRA in PRC Section 4126?
- 2. Are there any lands currently classified as SRA which do not meet the criteria for SRA and would be excluded by PRC Section 4127?

The accompanying classification key has been developed to assist in answering these questions. The key is intended to provide standard criteria to evaluate each area. It provides a method of screening many areas rapidly in order to focus quickly on areas that may need change in classification.

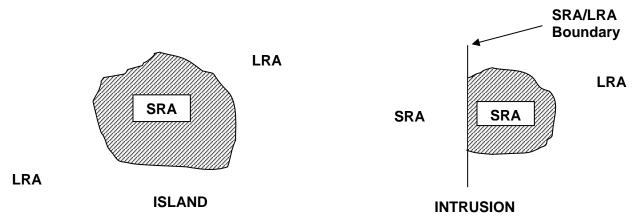
The key has a structure-density criterion and a minimum-acreage criterion. It is important to understand the rationale behind these two criteria. The rationale for the structure-density criterion is that lands having this level of development (three or more structural units per acre) typically require a significantly higher level of fire flow hydrants, and pressurized community water systems. These areas are typified by complete, or nearly complete, modification to native vegetation. Manmade structures to control runoff of rainfall instead of reliance on natural percolation is an element of subdivision planning and development.

For the initial review of SRA under this system in 1981, all lands were evaluated against a 40-acre minimum criterion. After reviewing all proposed changes, the Statewide Review Team recommended that the minimum island size be 250 acres for <u>Development</u> and 1,000 acres for <u>Permanent Crops</u> (agriculture). This recommendation was approved by the Director and adopted by the Board of Forestry.

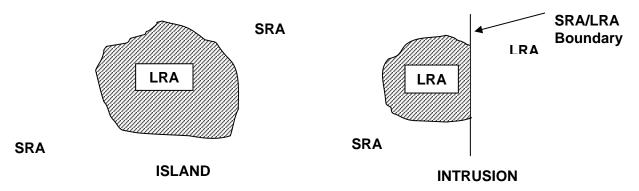
Begin the evaluation process by reviewing the key carefully. Identify all areas that <u>may</u> fit the key. Be <u>very liberal</u> in applying the elements of the key at this point. If there is any chance that an area may fit the key, include it. The intent is to identify all areas that may deserve further evaluation.

Delineate these areas in the following manner on the work map:

1. Possible change from SRA to LRA – delineate and cross hatch in purple.



2. Possible change from LRA to SRA – delineate and cross hatch in orange.



NOTE: Avoid small islands of SRA in LRA or LRA in SRA.

Three types of areas should emerge at this point.

- 1. Islands of SRA that are surrounded by LRA on all sides (exterior changes).
- 2. Islands of LRA that are surrounded by SRA on all sides (interior changes).
- 3. Intrusions of either SRA or LRA along the existing SRA/LRA boundary line (boundary line adjustments).

STEP III-CONDUCTING FIELD EVALUATION USING CLASSIFICATION KEY

The key is designed to ensure that all Ranger Units and Contract Counties view all areas in question in a uniform manner. The key also focuses on only those lands that may need reclassification.

All areas identified for potential change in classification will be evaluated against the criteria in the key that leads the evaluator through a series of questions/conditions. The answer to the question/condition either leads to a conclusion or another question/condition. Using the key requires some interpretation of the question/condition.

Each area identified on the work map will require an inspection. The best way to inspect an area is from the air. On-the-ground inspection may be required in addition to aerial inspection; however, experience has shown that most areas can be successfully and accurately keyed from the air. CDF air resources have administrative flight time built into their budget. If aerial photography is necessary, make arrangements through the appropriate Ranger Unit Headquarters for use of CDF air resources for administrative flights. All Contract Counties will make arrangements through the appropriate region for use of CDF air resources for administrative flights. Additionally, photographic documentation is necessary for each area. Digital photos should be used if possible. Aerial color slides can be used if digital is not available.

The classification of SRA will be evaluated at least every five years. Adjustments shall be made at more frequent intervals if major land-use changes occur. Changes from SRA to LRA can occur form expanding urbanization or changes to agricultural use. Changes can go both ways. For example, an area previously used for cultivated and irrigated corps may revert to natural vegetation and go form LRA to SRA. The SRA Mapping Coordinator in Sacramento will send to the Ranger Unit SRA mapping coordinator, notification from the State Board of Equalization of any approved incorporations or land-use changes.

Adjustments of boundary lines shall be made following these basic rules of thumb.

- 1. Whenever possible, obvious lines of land-use change will be used.
- 2. Whenever possible, boundary lines will be identifiable and easily administered in the field. Roads, pipelines, streams, backyards of subdivision, or other recognizable landmarks can be used. Irregular lines that follow irrigated and cultivated fields and fences are permissible if they are clearly definable. Extended fingers should be avoided.
- If lines of convenience are used, small areas of LRA may be included in SRA. However, SRA should not be eliminated by lines of convenience. Boundary lines should be located as close as possible to the place of obvious change between LRA and SRA.
- 4. "Contiguous rangeland" extends only from the toe of the first significant slope to the first good line of convenience.
- 5. "Watershed lands" will only be submitted for Statewide Review when, as a guide, they have ten inches of mean annual rainfall combined with upsloping topography and evidence of water storage and use.

STEP IV - DOCUMENTATION

The key will result in one of two conclusions:

- 1. No change in existing classification is warranted.
- 2. The current classification is questionable refer to review.

A. No Change

If the key directs to a conclusion, that results in no change in classification, the following situation may exist:

"The area is developing, but at this time an overriding state interest still remains. Areas such as this may in the future develop to the extent that no state interest remains."

If this situation exists, be sure you check the box in the "FIELD EVAULATION DOCUMENTATION FORM" that pertains to the future survey requirements and fill in the appropriate year when the next survey should be done.

Year of Survey: Resurvey 5 yr () 20 Less than 5 yrs. () 20

Documentation is required for all areas evaluated regardless of the conclusion obtained from the key. If the key directs the evaluator to Conclusion 1 above, the

following documentation will be retained in a permanent file at the local level and also forwarded to Region:

- 1. Aerial photographs (digital pictures or color slides) identified so as to allow orientation to the map.
- 2. The Field Evaluation Documentation Form including any data which supports the findings.
- 3. A copy of the local level shapefile.

B. Possible Change

If the key directs to a conclusion, which refers the area for statewide review, the following documentation is necessary:

- 1. Aerial photographs (digital pictures or color slides) identified so as to allow orientation to the map.
- 2. A copy of the ArcVlew shapefile containing the change.
- Field Evaluation Documentation Form describing the area and explaining why the change should be made. Also list the acres affected by Ranger Unit and County.
- 4. ArcView shapefiles delineating the proposed change and any other pertinent lines will be drawn and labeled to clearly identify the change.
 - a) Create a shapefile with all proposed changes in blue
 - b) Use the Ranger Unit boundary, Region Boundary, Road Layers, City Boundary shapefiles as needed on the map.
 - d) Identifier number on the shapefile attributes table will match the Field Evaluation Documentation Form.

REGIONAL REVIEW

The Statewide Review Team will evaluate all potential reclassifications identified in the filed evaluation process. Ranger Units/Contract Counties will submit all documentation (Shapefiles, digital photographs files, text documentation), to the Region SRA Coordinator through the Fire Plan database. As soon as the Ranger Unit SRA Coordinator uploads all files he/she will notify the Region SRA Coordinator by phone and EMAIL. Slides will be mailed or hand delivered. Region will ensure that the classification process has been correctly applied and that documentation is complete. The Ranger Unit and Region SRA Coordinators will print a copy of all maps, photos, and documentation and retain for their records.

Upon completion of all fieldwork and Regional review, the Region SRA Coordinator will notify the Sacramento SRA Coordinator by phone and EMAIL as soon as the Ranger Units maps and documentation has been checked and are uploaded to the Fire Plan Data Base. The Region SRA Coordinator will coordinate scheduling the statewide review and will appoint its representative to the Statewide Review Team.

STATEWIDE REVIEW

MEMBERSHIP

The Statewide Review Team shall consist of the following members:

- 1. A member of the Fire Protection Staff (Chairman)
- 2. A member of the Board of Forestry's staff
- 3. A representative of the Region where the areas for review are located.
- 4. A representative for the affected Contract County.

USE OF ADVISORS

A Unit level representative will be appointed as an advisor to the team (if needed). The review team may also request technical advice from others in the Department or from any other public agency.

DOCUMENTATION

The review team will have all documentation from the field evaluation available to it for the review. The team will document the basis for its recommendations. REVIEW PROCESS

Where a change in classification is proposed, the review team may accept the proposed change based on the documented justification or it may conduct an on-site inspection.

REVIEW CRITERIA

The statewide review criteria are set forth in a key format similar to the Field Evaluation Key. The question/condition statements in this key are designed to measure the elements of PRC Sections 4126-4128.

SPECIAL REVIEW

The normal period between classification efforts is five years. However, the Statewide Review Team may set a shorter period of time for a particular area if, in the opinion of the team, the area's land-use pattern indicates that the classification of that area is likely to change in less than five years. Likewise the Ranger Unit or Contract County may submit for review, any area in which significant land-use changes occur between review periods.

REVIEW TEAM'S RECOMMENDATION

The only recommendations forwarded to the Director are those which change the existing classification of land. For all other areas, a permanent file shall be maintained for use during the next formal review (5 years) or special review.

DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL

The Director will review all Statewide Review Team recommendations for changes in land classification. He/she will forward all approved recommendations to the Board of Forestry together with supporting documentation. He/she will also notify the affected local government agencies of his/her recommendations and advise the Contract Counties of any potential fiscal impacts.

BOARD OF FORESTRY

The Board of Forestry will act upon the Director's recommendations for changes in classification of SRA, after appropriate public hearings. The Board's decision will be transmitted through channels to all administrative levels and to the affected local governments.

To provide sufficient lead time for the Board to schedule hearings and to notify local government of its decisions, all areas must have fourth level review (Director's approval) by July 1 of any year. This allows sufficient time for public notification (45 days) and to conduct hearings. The Board's decision will be

available by November of any year and become effective July 1 of the following year. This schedule provides 12 months lead time for local government from the time of Director's preliminary notification to adjust to changes in CDF's fire protection system.

APPENDICES

FIELD EVALUATION KEY

This key is to be used by the Ranger Unit/Contract County to identify areas to be reviewed for possible change in classification.

Α.	The area	being	considered	is currently	/ classified	as:

State Responsibility Area. Go to B

Local Responsibility Area Go to C

B. State Responsibility Area:

I. The area has been modified by man to <u>permanent crops or</u> development.

Discussion:

Limiting the scope to man's modifications eliminates from consideration natural areas such as large rock outcroppings typical to the high Sierra regions. Man's modifications, defined changed the character of the area so that it no longer produces or is capable of producing forest products, forage, or water for domestic, irrigation, or industrial use.

- Crops - Long term non-flammable crops such as orchards and vineyards which are irrigated and cultivated. (Annuals such as row crops and grain, are <u>not</u>, a long-term modification.)
- Development - Continuous urbanization averaging more than three dwellings and/or commercial units per acre over forty or more acres.

Yes Go to II No SRA

II. The area has definable boundaries.

Discussion:

To be identifiable, an area must have clearly definable boundaries; for example: (1) jurisdictional boundaries of public service entities; (2) man-made features such as roads; and (3) natural features such as streams and lakeshores.

Yes	Go to III
No	SRA

III. The area is or creates:
An island
A boundary line adjustment Refer to Review
IV. The area is larger than:
(1) 250 acres for <u>Development</u> or,(2) 1,000 acres for <u>Permanent Crops</u>
Yes Go to III No SRA
C. Local Responsibility Area.
 The area is covered wholly or in part by forests or by trees producing or capable of producing forest products.
Yes Go to IV No Go to II
II. The area is covered wholly or in part by timber, brush, undergrowth, or grass, whether of commercial value or not, which protects the soil from excessive erosion, retards runoff of water, or accelerates water percolation, if such lands are sources of water which is available for irrigation, or domestic, or industrial use. As a guide, these "Watershed Lands" should have ten inches of mean annual rainfall combined with upsloping topography and evidence of water storage and use.
Yes Go to IV No Go to III
III. The area is principally used or useful for range or forge purposes and is contiguous to forest or watershed lands. "Contiguous Rangeland" extends only from the toe of first significant slope to first good lines of convenience.
Go to IV
IV. The area is principally used or useful for range or forage purposes but is (1) separated from forest or watershed lands by man's development (2) irrigated or covered by cultivated crops so that the vegetation is no ordinarily flammable, or (3) beyond the toe of first significant slope and first good line of convenience.

YES - LRA No - Refer for review

V. The area is:

An island of LRA in SRA or a boundary line adjustment.

Refer to Review

The area creates:

An island of SRA in LRA LRA

STATEWIDE REVIEW TEST

<u>KEY</u>

This key is to be used by the Statewide Review Team to evaluate proposed changes in classification. A "yes" answer to any item in Part A s sufficient to classify the land as SRA. All items in Part A must be addressed and documented.

PART A

I. Is there a significant threat of fire originating from within the area and spreading to other SRA (consider configuration, topography, location, past fire history)?
Yes SRA (DOCUMENT) No Go to II
II. Do substantial values exist for the production of forest products, forage, or water?
Yes SRA (DOCUMENT) No Go to III
III. Does or will the omission from SRA seriously impair the state's ability to provide needed protection to adjoining SRA lands?
Yes SRA (DOCUMENT) No Go to IV
IV. If a fire denudes the area will it initiate a fire/flood sequence?
Yes SRA (DOCUMENT) No Go to V
V. Will or does removal from SRA cause administrative inefficiency?
Yes SRA (DOCUMENT) No LRA

PART B

If Part	A indicates	that the	land should	be classified	as SRA.	complete Part	В.

I.	Does or will inclusion in SRA (by providing state-funded fire protection)
unduly tend to encourage land-use changes that are inconsistent	unduly tend to encourage land-use changes that are inconsistent with
	the protection of forest, watershed or range values?

Yes LRA (DOCUMENT)
No SRA

II. The area is fully developed. No substantial further development is likely, but an overriding state interest still remains.

Yes (DOCUMENT)

REVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NORMAL 5-YEAR REVIEWS AND SPECIAL REVIEWS

- 1. Level one Field evaluation process by March 15.
- 2. Level two Regional review by April 1.
- 3. Level three Statewide Review by June 15.
- 4. Level four Director's Review by July 1.

Notify local government July 1.

Notify contract counties of fiscal impacts July 1.

5. Level five – Board of Forestry.

Public hearings notification – July 1.

Public hearings – September 1 – October 15.

Final decision – October 15.

Implementation of changes (8.5 months) – July 1. (Next calendar year)

Page 1 of			
FIELD EVALUATION DO	CUMENTATION FORM	Л	
I.D. Number:	Ranger Unit/C	ontract Co:	
Descriptive name:			
Year of Survey: Res	survey 5 yr () 20	Less than 5 yrs. () 20)
Field Evaluation Key Resu	ults: No Change() S	State Review ()	
·	3	, ,	
Key Item Leading to Cond Leave one (delete all other		I C-I C-II C-III C-I\	/
Check one: SRA to FRA FRA to SRA LRA to SRA	SRA to LRA		
Total acres to be changed			
DESCRIPTION OF AREA			

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE FIELD EVALUATION DOCUMENTATION FORM

A Field Evaluation Documentation Form will be completed for all areas shown on work map.

<u>ID Number</u>: Use Ranger Unit/Contract County 3 letter designator, the initials SRA, the year of the review 2000, and a sequential identifier which will match the identifier used on the shapefile attribute table.

For example: ORCSRA2000_1 ORCSRA2000_2 ORCSRA2000_3

Ranger Unit: Insert name of Ranger Unit or Contract County.

Description: Insert descriptive name of area. Example: Auburn Lake Trails.

For all SRA intrusions to LRA write into this block

"SRA INTRUSION CORRECTION"

Year of Survey: Insert year of survey.

Resurvey: Check appropriate box. Add year of next survey.

Field Evaluation Key Results: Check the appropriate box.

Key Item: Delete all others leaving only the 1 key result that you are using

Description of Area: Describe area in narrative form.

EXAMPLE: Auburn Lake Trails is a 750-acre subdivision with approximately 10% of 2,130 lots developed. It currently keys out as State Responsibility Area. However, at full buildout it may not meet the criteria for SRA. The best estimate of full buildout is 1990. This area should be re-evaluated at the next normally scheduled classification.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

No Change Key Results

Ranger Unit/ Contract County	Region Review	Statewide Review Team
Field Evaluation		
ArcView file	ArcView file	
Field Evaluation	Field Evaluation	
Documentation	Documentation	
Form	Form	
Digital Pictures	Digital Pictures	
(preferred) or	(preferred) or	
35MM Color Slides	35MM Color Slides	

Statewide Review Key Result

Ranger Unit/		Statewide
Contract County	Region Review	Review Team
Field Evaluation		
Field Evaluation	Field Evaluation	Field Evaluation
Documentation	Documentation	Documentation
Form	Form	Form
Digital pictures	Digital pictures	Digital pictures
(preferred) or 35MM	(preferred) or 35MM	(preferred) or 35MM
Color Slides (3	Color Slides (2	Color Slides (1
copies each slide)	copies each slide)	copies each slide)
ArcView SRA	ArcView SRA	ArcView SRA
Shapefiles	Shapefiles	Shapefiles

It is also required that each Ranger Unit, Contract County, Region and Statewide Coordinators retain a copy of each map, digital photo or slide and all documentation .

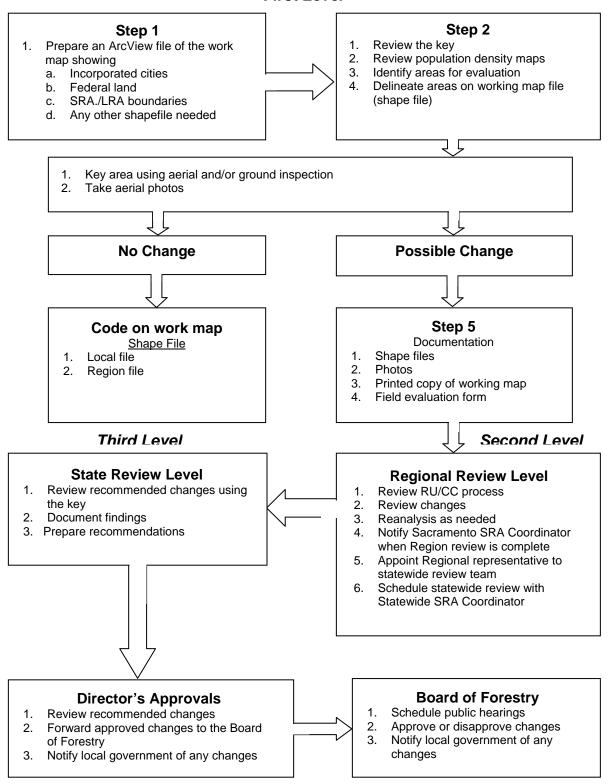
MATERIALS LIST

ITEM	SOURCE*
Work Map and Shapefiles	Fire Plan Data Base
2. Documentation	Local photocopies
Digital Camera or 35MM color film	Retain or purchase locally
4. 7½" Topographic Maps	Fire Plan data Base
5. Aircraft administrative flights	Ranger Unit, Region, or Sacramento Headquarters

• Region will provide all local source items to Contract Counties

SRA Classification System Flow Chart

First Level



RECORDING AUTOMATIC EXCLUSIONS

Automatic exclusions (incorporated city or federal land boundaries) which change the status of State Responsibility Area shall be reported to the Director's office (Fire Protection Section) by the Ranger Unit as they occur. The Statewide SRA Coordinator will send notification to the Ranger Units as he/she gets notified from the State Board of Equalization.

The Ranger Unit will report verified changes by sending the ArcView shape file with an attached explanation to the Region SRA Coordinator, who will the review the changes and notify the Sacramento SRA Coordinator. The Sacramento SRA Coordinator will then have the changes digitized at the Teale Data Center and a new statewide SRA shapefile will be posted on the Fire Plan Database.

The Ranger Unit will create a new shapefile with the following, new boundaries, and any other pertinent lines or polygons created in ArcView and labeled to clearly identify the change. The new boundary will be blue.

Use the Field Evaluation Documentation Form. In the "DESCRIPTION AREA" provide the following

- a) Region, Ranger Unit, and County identification.
- b) Description of the change; name of the city of federal ownership involved.
- c) Acres of State Responsibility Area deleted.
- d) Effective date of change.
- e) Name of person preparing the map and date prepared.